

horti CULTURE

for the home gardener



Number 13

Roses

For many people, the rose is the reigning monarch of the garden. Its regal fragrance and beauty can be expressed in stunning shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, lavender, white or combinations of colors! Roses can be grown as bushes, hedges, small trees, climbers, and miniatures. Rose hobbyists and fanciers spend countless hours caring for their roses to insure nothing but perfect blooms on their plants. For most homeowners, however, roses need not be any more time-consuming or difficult than any other garden plant.

TYPE

There are several different types of roses commonly grown in this area. Primarily they are: Hybrid Teas, Grandifloras, Floribundas, climbers, and miniature roses. With only slight differences, all can get by on about the same care.

PLANTING

Roses are best purchased bare root in January. They are also available in containers in late spring. Since the roots of bare root roses spread out in a cone-like manner, they must be planted in a hole which contains a small mound of dirt. The hole should be deep enough to spread the roots around the mound, allowing the roots to be covered with soil halfway between the graft and root stock. A good bare root bush will usually have three good canes spread evenly above the graft and well developed roots.

CULTURE

For maximum growth, roses need a constant supply of water but the soil should never be kept soggy wet. Water should be allowed to penetrate the soil to a depth of at least 16-18 inches in order to reach all the rose roots. Filling basins around the base of the plants is the preferred method of watering. Like most plants, however, roses do appreciate an occasional 'shower bath' with a sprinkler to rinse dust (and insects) off the foliage. Always do this in the morning so the leaves have plenty of time to dry completely before evening.

Apply any good complete fertilizer with an analysis of approximately 10-6-4 at the rate of one cup per application on mature plants. The first application should be made at the time the plants are pruned. Succeeding applications are then made each time the plant has completed a blooming cycle. This is the time when the plants need the nutrients to make new growth for the next bloom cycle. Follow this schedule until the roses start to slow down on their growth (about October). Always water the fertilizer in thoroughly after application.

Roses have a few major insect and disease problems but knowing what they are and what to do for them is half the battle. The three main insect enemies are aphids, thrips, and mites (also called spider mites, red spider, two-spotted mite). Spray or dust plants with Malathion, Pyrethrum, Meta-systox, or even wash the bushes with a forceful stream of water to help control aphids and thrips. Mites can be controlled with Kelthane, Diazinon, Malathion, Meta-systox, or the water treatment. Follow the insecticide manufacturer's directions for amounts to apply and frequency of application.

OVER

The main diseases that affect roses in this area are powdery mildew and occasionally rust. Both diseases can be controlled with Benlate. Always follow the manufacturer's label directions carefully when using any type of chemical spray. Roses planted in uncrowded, sunny spots with good air circulation around and through them will be much less susceptible to disease. Keeping the foliage dry will also help prevent disease problems.

Roses benefit greatly from mulching. They have feeder roots fairly close to the surface of the soil. A protective mulch layer helps to keep them cool in the hot summer and also conserves moisture. See HortiCULTURE sheet #8 for more ideas on mulching.

PRUNING

Pruning roses for best flower production is one of the most frequently asked questions about roses. In the mild climate of Southern California, pruning is very easy. It is best done in February when the roses are at their most dormant stage. Prune away any dead branches or twigs. Weak or spindly looking stems should be removed with cuts made just above plump, healthy, outward facing buds. Stems smaller than a pencil in diameter should be removed. This results in a vase-shaped plant that is open in the center so that air and light can circulate freely throughout the plant. Also remove any growth that originates below the bud union of the rose. Last of all, head back the remaining canes by one third. Any cuts that are larger than pencil size may be sealed with an asphalt pruning compound (available at nurseries and garden centers). Remove wilted flowers by cutting long stems. This will encourage more flowers and keep the plant shaped.

For climbing roses, leave most of the long canes and cut back only the secondary branches, leaving 2 or 3 buds on each. When old canes show a decline in flower production, they should be removed completely and new ones allowed to grow in their place.

New varieties of roses are introduced by the growers each winter. Outstanding new introductions are given an award called the All-America Rose Selections or A.A.R.S. by the American Rose Society each year since 1940. At Descanso Gardens all of the roses given this award are planted and growing in an All America Winner rose garden along with other named varieties. Adjacent to the award winning rose garden is a unique History of Roses garden tracing the evolution of our modern rose. Here the old fashion roses, many semi-vining, are pruned each year and vines pinned to obtain the desired flowers.

Homeowners confused with the many varieties of roses can observe the growing and flowering characteristics of roses to select for their own garden in the modern and History of Roses garden at Descanso Gardens. Flowers are in bloom from spring through fall. An annual pruning demonstration is held at Descanso Gardens during the month of January where information may be obtained on cultural problems as well as pruning.